Executive Summary and Authorized Officer's Determination For the Upper Horse Prairie Watershed Assessment

Bureau of Land Management
Dillon Field Office

This document summarizes the findings of the Upper Horse Prairie Watershed Assessment (UHPW) conducted during the 2012 field season. The watershed includes 29 allotments (51,629 acres) and one Resource Reserve allotment (2,404 acres available for grazing to supplement the allotment with the highest need in the Field Office).

The *Upper Horse Prairie Watershed Assessment Report* describes the existing condition of BLM administered lands within the watershed. The assessment also presents management and project recommendations for improving resource conditions where needed. Please refer to the Assessment Report for a complete discussion of resource conditions, concerns and management opportunities.

In January 2013, the BLM will begin National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documentation. The NEPA document will include all BLM-administered public lands covered in the Upper Horse Prairie Assessment. Alternative management will be analyzed wherever it is determined that allotments are not meeting the Standards, allotments are meeting the Standards but have site specific resource concerns, there are noxious weed infestations, unhealthy forest conditions, and/or fuels conditions outside the natural range of variability. Alternatives will also be developed for travel management to both, correct mapping errors and enhance access to public lands within the watershed.

The issue of scope and scale must be kept in mind in evaluating each standard. It is recognized that isolated sites within a landscape may not be meeting the standards; however, considering broader scope and scale, the area may be in proper functioning condition. No single indicator provides sufficient information to determine rangeland health; they are used in combination to provide information necessary to determine rangeland health. Alternatively, just because a standard is being met does not mean that the conditions on the ground represent desired resource condition or objectives. For example an upland site with reduced composition of bunchgrasses may meet the upland health standard if it sustains a native plant community, even if it is dominated by low producing, low palatability

grasses, shrubs and or forbs. While such a site may have stable soils and allow for proper hydrologic function, it won't provide the forage, cover or structure that it would if it was dominated by taller, more palatable plants.

In addition, every riparian reach or acre of upland habitat does not need to be rated as PFC for the allotment to meet standards. The scope of the resource being assessed and relative importance of riparian/wetland habitat or upland sites within the context of the allotment as a whole is considered to determine if the allotment is meeting standards or not. For example, if an allotment has 15 miles of riparian habitat and 13 miles habitat is functioning properly while 2 miles is functioning at risk, the relative importance of the two miles that is functioning at risk is considered in making an overall determination of meeting the riparian health standard or not. If the two miles of stream at risk has fisheries habitat or is contributing to water quality impairment, the allotment would not meet the riparian health standard. However, if the two miles of stream functioning at risk are low energy, isolated intermittent reaches or spring brooks, not hydrologically connected to larger bodies of water, the allotment as a whole may meet the riparian health standard and these isolated reaches will be addressed as site specific resource concerns.

The table below summarizes the determination of rangeland health standards by allotment. It also briefly describes the significant causal factors identified by the interdisciplinary team (IDT) on allotments where one or more of the Standards are not in compliance.

Allotment Name, Number, & BLM Acres	**Are Healthy Rangelands Standards Being Met?**					**Factors in Failing to Achieve Standards**
	Upland	Riparian Wetland	Water Quality	Air Quality	Bio-diversity	
Alkali Creek-Barrett 00755 Acres: 520	Yes	Yes	1	Yes	Yes	None
Bear Creek 30018 Acres:1846	Yes	No	1	Yes	No	Impacts to riparian areas by ungulates.
Beaverhead Isolated 30221 Acres: 2314	Yes	Yes	1	Yes	Yes	None

Allotment Name, Number, & BLM Acres	Are Healthy Rangelands Standards Being Met?					Factors in Failing to Achieve Standards
	Upland	Riparian Wetland	Water Quality	Air Quality	Bio-diversity	
Bloody Dick 10726 Acres: 604	No	Yes	1	Yes	Yes	Impacts to upland areas by livestock.
Bloody Dick USFS 30645 Acres: 271	Yes	Yes	No[2]	Yes	Yes	Bloody Dick Creek (BDC) reach 1314, was rated PFC. BLM management is not contributing to BDC's impairment.
Brenner 30035 Acres: 2600	Yes	Yes	No[2]	Yes	Yes	Horse Prairie Creek (HPC) reach 1385, was rated PFC. BLM management is not contributing to HPC's impairment.
Chinatown 30016 Acres: 4785	Yes	Yes	1	Yes	Yes	None
Coyote Creek 20165 Acres: 954	Yes	No	1	Yes	Yes	Impacts to riparian areas by livestock.
Coyote Flat 30017 Acres: 3873	Yes	No	1	Yes	Yes	Impacts to riparian areas by livestock and road crossings.
Coyote Isolated 20228 Acres: 187	Yes	N/A	1	Yes	Yes	None
Esterwald 10166 Acres: 8	Yes	NA	1	Yes	Yes	None
Exchange, 30032 (Resource Reserve Allotment) Acres: 2404	Yes	Yes	1	Yes	Yes	None
Frenchie Creek-Barrett 00756 Acres: 159	Yes	No	1	Yes	Yes	Impacts to riparian areas by livestock.
Horse Prairie Custodial 00753 Acres: 2601	Yes	No	No[2]	Yes	No	Horse Prairie Creek (HPC) reaches 1380 and 1332 were rated FAR Static. BLM management is contributing to HPC's impairment. Impacts to riparian areas by livestock and from irrigation diversions.

Allotment Name, Number, & BLM Acres	Are Healthy Rangelands Standards Being Met?					Factors in Failing to Achieve Standards
	Upland	Riparian Wetland	Water Quality	Air Quality	Bio-diversity	
L.C. Painter Creek 10629 Acres: 92	Yes	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	None
Leadman 30021 Acres: 3732	Yes	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	None
Lehmi Pass 10145 Acres: 2426	Yes	No	1	Yes	Yes	Impacts to riparian areas from roads and by ungulates.
Magpie Trail Gulch 10144 Acres: 80	Yes	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	None
North Black Canyon 30020 Acres: 6603	Yes	Yes	1	Yes	Yes	None
North Frying Pan 30647 Acres: 42	Yes	Yes	1	Yes	Yes	None
Painter Creek 20675 Acres: 460	Yes	Yes	1	Yes	Yes	None
Pierce SGC 00762 Acres: 76	Yes	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	None
Rape Creek 30019 Acres: 9796	Yes	No	1	Yes	Yes	Impacts to riparian areas by livestock.
Roberts Gulch 20725 Acres: 2137	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	None
Selway 20004 Acres: 1209	Yes	No	1	Yes	No	Impacts to riparian areas by ungulates and road crossings.
Selway Isolated 20111 Acres: 236	Yes	No	1	Yes	Yes	Impacts to riparian areas by ungulates.

Allotment Name, Number, & BLM Acres	Are Healthy Rangelands Standards Being Met?					Factors in Failing to Achieve Standards
	Upland	Riparian Wetland	Water Quality	Air Quality	Bio-diversity	
Shesher 20626 Acres: 40	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	None
South Black Canyon 10130 Acres: 3493	Yes	Yes	1	Yes	Yes	None
Steinbreaker 10146 Acres: 122	Yes	Yes	1	Yes	Yes	None
Trail Creek Seeding 30025 Acres: 363	Yes	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	None

[1] Tributary streams in the UHPW are not on the 303(d) list, are not priority streams, and are not scheduled to be evaluated by the DEQ.

[2] The Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has the responsibility for making water quality determinations and has completed its evaluation of 303(d)-listed streams. Bloody Dick Creek and Horse Prairie Creek flow through BLM administered land, have been evaluated by Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and beneficial use support determinations have been completed. Bloody Dick and Horse Prairie Creek do not meet several Beneficial Uses and TMDLs that are required. Probable sources include abandoned mine lands, grazing and crop irrigation.

Authorized Officer's Determination

Based on my review of the *Upper Horse Prairie Watershed Assessment Report*, the interdisciplinary team's recommendations and other relevant data and information, I have determined that the following 19 allotments and the Exchange-Resource Reserve Allotment in the UHPW **meet** all five Standards for Rangeland Health and conform to the eleven guidelines for livestock grazing management established for BLM lands in Western Montana.

1. Alkali Creek-Barrett
2. Beaverhead Isolated
3. Bloody Dick USFS
4. Brenner
5. Chinatown
6. Coyote Isolated
7. Esterwald
8. Exchange-Resource Reserve
9. L.C. Painter Creek
10. Leadman
11. Magpie Trail Gulch
12. North Black Canyon
13. North Frying Pan
14. Painter Creek
15. Pierce SGC
16. Roberts Gulch
17. Shesher
18. South Black Canyon
19. Steinbreaker
20. Trail Creek Seeding

The Bloody Dick USFS and Brenner allotments include streams that are on the 303(d) list and therefore, do not meet the Water Quality Standard. However, I have determined that BLM authorized activities, including livestock grazing, are not significant causal factors in failing to meet the standard. These allotments are included with other allotment that met the Standards because no change in management is recommended for water quality.

I have determined that the following 10 allotments **do not meet** one or more of the Standards for Rangeland Health. I have also determined that current livestock management is a significant contributing factor to these standards not being met.

1. Bear Creek
2. Bloody Dick
3. Coyote Creek
4. Coyote Flat
5. Frenchie Creek-Barrett
6. Horse Prairie Custodial
7. Lemhi Pass
8. Rape Creek
9. Selway
10. Selway Isolated

Pursuant to 43 CFR 4180.2(c), the authorized officer shall take appropriate action as soon as practicable but not later than the start of the next grazing year upon determining that existing grazing management practices or levels of grazing use on public lands are significant factors in failing to achieve the standards and conform with the guidelines that are made effective under this section. Appropriate action means implementing actions that will result in significant progress toward fulfillment of the standards and significant progress toward conformance with the guidelines. Practices and activities subject to standards and guidelines include the development of grazing-related portions of activity plans, establishment of terms and conditions of permits, leases and other grazing authorizations, and range improvement activities such as vegetation manipulation, fence construction and development of water.

In 2013, an environmental assessment will be completed that proposes and analyzes management alternatives necessary to mitigate or correct resource concerns identified in the Assessment Report.

Authorized Officer's Signature:

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Dillon Field Manager